

THE WASHINGTON POST

17 June 1979

Article appeared  
on page B-7

*Jack Anderson*

## SALT II: Speeding the Arms Race

Few issues are more confusing to the average American than SALT II. Experts with the best information and the best intentions have come down on diametrically opposed sides of the controversy. So how is the bewildered citizen supposed to figure out what it's all about?

On the face of it, SALT seems straightforward enough: Strategic Arms Limitation Talks. Judging it on this basis, most Americans have supported what they understandably see as an agreement that will put a lid on our extravagant defense spending.

But our associate Dale Van Atta, after reviewing scores of top-secret documents and interviewing several knowledgeable intelligence sources, found the picture confusing and contradictory. However, one thing emerges crystal clear: The treaty signed by President Carter and Soviet boss Leonid Brezhnev in Vienna will stimulate the arms race, not stop it. That was the case with SALT I, and there is no reason to suppose SALT II will have a different effect.

To put it bluntly, the Russians cheated on SALT I. The Americans responded by trying to develop new weapons, such as multiple-warhead missiles, that would meet the letter of the treaty, if not its spirit—a technique that might be called "legal cheating." In both cases, the results were the same: increased military spending, not disarmament.

The difficulty in the SALT agreements seems to be that they are based on the premise that, to prevent a nuclear holocaust, each of the superpowers must have enough deliverable bombs to ensure the other's destruction—on equal terms of horror. If either the United States or the Soviet Union could wipe out the other without itself suffering total obliteration, SALT would be a failure. Former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, with possibly unintended irony, terms this concept "Mutual Assured Destruction"—MAD.

Former President Nixon and his national security Svengali, Henry Kissinger, spelled out the four operating principles of MAD in the top-secret National Security Decision Memorandum 16 of June 24, 1969, for the guidance of our military leaders:

"1. Maintain high confidence that our second strike [retaliatory] capability is sufficient to deter an all-out surprise attack on our strategic forces.

"2. Maintain forces to insure that the Soviet Union would have no incentive to strike the United States first in a crisis.

"3. Maintain the capability to deny the Soviet Union the ability to cause significantly more deaths and industrial damage in the United States in a nuclear war than they themselves would suffer.

"4. Deploy defenses which limit damage from small attacks or accidental launches to a low level."

Insiders told us, that these "Dr. Strangelove" guidelines have not been changed by President Carter.

Under SALT I, the four MAD principles actually provided the impetus for increased military spending to develop new missiles that would be our insurance against World War III. The agreement limited the number of missiles permitted to each nation—a ceiling that had not yet been reached—but not the number of warheads in each missile.

Both Russia and the United States used that loophole in SALT I to increase their nuclear stockpiles without actually violating the treaty. Not content with such legal stretching of the pact's provisions, the Soviets simply resorted to violations of the SALT I agreement, the record indicates.

American adherence, generally, to the letter of the treaty put the United States in a declining strategic position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. SALT I allowed the Russians to catch up to our once-superior strategic position.

To counter this development, the Pentagon asked for and received bigger and bigger appropriations to develop more frightening weapons, on grounds that we must keep abreast of the Soviets' legal and extralegal arms buildup.

The same thing began happening again even before the SALT II treaty was signed. President Carter has explained that SALT II demands that we increase our armament to the ceilings set by the latest agreement. Political analysts told us that only under the shadow of SALT II—and Americans' fear that we could wind up second-best to the Russians—would such increased military spending

The long-term increase in defense spending serves a short-term domestic political goal: It may appease Senate hawks who would otherwise vote against ratification of the SALT agreement. Carter, meanwhile, is selling SALT II on the basis that, without the treaty, the arms race would be even hotter. This, of course, is a theory that can never be proven.

However, using all the facts at their disposal, analysts in the Central Intelligence Agency have raised doubts about the theory. According to one of the CIA's secret National Intelligence Estimates, the experts concluded: "If a SALT II agreement is not achieved, we believe that the Soviet leaders' objectives for their strategic forces would be much the same."

Warning that the Soviets can be expected to be far more aggressive with the agreement than we will be, a CIA estimate explains: "Deeply held ideological and doctrinal convictions impel the Soviet leaders to pose as an ultimate goal the attainment of a dominant position over the West, particularly the U.S., in terms of political, economic, social and military strength."

Whether this eternal goal of Soviet policy will be affected by SALT II and, if so, to what extent, the CIA cannot tell.

In the end, the experts conclude, it all seems to boil down to this: With or without SALT II, the best deterrent on both sides is mutual ignorance of intentions. The Russians don't know what the man in the White House would do in a particular situation, and we don't know what the men in the Kremlin would do.

In an uncertain world, uncertainty may be our best hope for survival.

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